

Bournemouth reach zero hour

08/09

ON THE face of it, a rearranged fixture between the 91st and 92nd teams in the Football League was a pointless exercise. Literally. Unless you count negative points, that is.

Luton and Bournemouth began the League Two campaign with handicaps of 30 and 17 points, respectively, for financial mismanagement and, in Luton's case, flouting FA rules on paying agents. Come the beginning of December, they were still beneath the line on which 21 of their rivals started.

For them, avoiding relegation to the Blue Square Premier will be a triumph worthy of team photos on the boardroom walls and open-top bus rides around their respective towns.

An entertaining 3-3 draw means that Bournemouth have now reached the dizzy heights of zero points. Perversely, there appears to be more long-term hope at Luton, even though they remain 10 points behind their opponents and a gargantuan 20 from safety.

With television presenter Nick Owen as chairman, the new company has reduced the monthly debt from £400,000 to around £100,000. It would be less if they hadn't invested

IVAN SPECK visits the League's nether regions, where Bournemouth and Luton battled to escape negative equity last night

heavily in a centre of excellence to bring on their own youngsters.

Sadly for Luton there will be no FA Cup revenue this season. Their conquerors on Saturday, Southend United, drew Chelsea at Stamford Bridge. Such is life at the bottom.

Bournemouth, by contrast, have the prospect of Blackburn Rovers at home if they can negotiate a tricky replay away to Blyth Spartans next week. Live television revenue has already brought in £80,000 with a further £40,000 guaranteed for the replay.

The money is vital to Bournemouth's hopes of survival as a club of any standing. They are so cash-strapped that producing a match programme is by no means certain.

For their respective managers, Mick Harford and Jimmy Quinn, the spectre of relegation has to be ignored. For all their faults, the teams produced an entertaining spec-



Hope: Mick Harford

tacle last night. A sliced clearance into his own net by Bournemouth left-back Ryan Garry gave Luton a 17th-minute lead, only for the impressive Mark Molesley to equalise within a minute and then put the visitors ahead with a cool finish and Kevin Gallen's stirring free-kick restored the equality.

Slack Luton marking allow Matt Tubbs a free header before Paul McVeigh assured

HOW THEY STAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Wycombe	18	11	7	0	26	8	40
Bradford	18	10	3	5	34	24	33
Darlington	18	9	5	4	31	17	32
Shrewsbury	18	8	7	3	35	16	31
Rochdale	18	8	7	3	30	19	31
Bury	18	9	4	5	28	19	31
Brentford	18	8	7	3	22	13	31
Exeter	18	8	5	5	24	21	29
Gillingham	18	8	4	6	26	26	28
Dag & Red	18	8	3	7	36	21	27
Aldershot	18	8	3	7	24	29	27
Chesterfield	18	6	5	7	31	27	23
Lincoln City	18	6	5	7	18	19	23
Port Vale	18	6	2	10	20	30	20
Macclesfield	18	6	2	10	20	35	20
Accrington	18	5	4	9	20	23	19
Notts County	18	3	9	6	23	29	18
Morecambe	18	3	9	6	19	27	18
Chester	18	4	4	10	21	35	16
Barnet	18	3	5	10	19	37	14
†Rotherham	18	7	6	5	23	21	10
Grimsby	18	1	7	10	14	34	10
†Bournemouth	18	3	8	7	21	29	0
*Luton	18	5	5	8	21	27	-10

(*30pts deducted. †17pts deducted)

honour all round by driving home a penalty five minutes from time.

Adhering to the new club motif of Luton Town 2020, the year by which they hope to be prosperous once more, 2020 last night referred to the denomination of the two coins for which juniors could get in. Judging by the chances on offer to both teams, it might also have been the final score.